

Race to Bring Victim's Sister to LI

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Relatives of the Salvadoran immigrant who died in a house fire in Huntington Station along with her two baby daughters are racing against the clock today to try to bring the woman's younger sister to the United States in time for the funeral on Friday.

The younger sister, Claudia Patricia Alfaro, 18, went to the U.S. Embassy in San Salvador on Wednesday, but was turned away at the door even though Rep. Steve Israel's office had contacted the embassy and urged officials to grant Alfaro a visa, said Israel spokesman Jack Pratt.

Alfaro went back this morning and was allowed into the embassy, but her application was rejected, Pratt said. Israel's office, frantically working the international telephone lines, instructed her in a call to stay inside the embassy while they try to contact higher-level embassy officials.

The press office at the embassy did not immediately return a telephone call seeking comment on why the application was rejected.

A disappointed Israel said today, "We continue to try and push every button we can and are not going to give up."

Alfaro, a law student, hasn't seen her mother or two surviving siblings in years since they all emigrated to the United States. Their mother, Maria Alfaro, 42, is devastated by the loss of Betty Alfaro, 21, and her two little girls, Jennifer, 23 months, and Katie, 5 months, who died Sunday.

Suffolk County police say the fire at the family's house on East Pulaski Road was reported about 5:30 a.m. Authorities have not yet determined the cause, although they say they have uncovered no indications of foul play. The girls' father, Melvin Perichi, 19, was asleep on a couch in the living room at the time and was unable to rescue his family, who were in a bedroom down the hall.

Maria Alfaro says her only wish now is that all of her surviving three children be present for the funeral and burial.

"The desire of my heart," Maria Alfaro said in Spanish, "Is that my other daughter could come."

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